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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY'S MILITARY AND DEMOCRACY

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) The Turkish military's April 27 memorandum that fueled the political crisis here was followed by a virtual black-out with the military refusing to speak with either domestic or foreign contacts. The silence was broken recently when D/CHOD Saygun volunteered an explanation of the military's motives and current thinking. We used the exchange to reiterate the need for pragmatism and compromise -- by all players -- in support of Turkish democracy and the constitutional process.

¶2. (S) In a recent meeting with DCM, Saygun raised the subject of Turkish domestic politics and said it was important we understand why the military felt compelled to make its April 27 statement. He said the military spoke out solely to ensure the protection of Turkey's secular system. This is the principle responsibility of the Turkish military, which they are both obligated and determined to fulfill. He asserted that Turkey's constitution empowered the military to protect the secular state -- that was what they had done and what they would continue to do.

¶3. (S) DCM responded by emphasizing the most precious quality of contemporary Turkey is that it is both secular and democratic -- and both must be preserved. She noted the growing tensions and polarization throughout the country and urged that the military exercise caution and pragmatism. Avoiding confrontation and instability and ensuring that the political process proceeds in a way that is fully consistent with the constitution is in the best interest of Turkey and of all Turks regardless of their partisan affiliation.

¶4. (S) Saygun said that the military did not want confrontation and would not seek it out. He claimed they easily could have sent tanks rolling in the streets if they had wanted to, but they did not. He also argued that the military was far more concerned with stability -- political, economic, and social -- than the AKP which had made no effort to compromise.

¶5. (S) DCM underscored the importance of having the on-going parliamentary election proceed calmly and that all accept the results of the popular vote. Saygun agreed enthusiastically and claimed the TGS had "no problems" with AKP in parliament or in government -- their only difficulty was with radical policies that threaten stability.

¶6. (S) Comment: There is rampant speculation here about TGS' next move in the on-going political drama. Overheated rumors include efforts to shut down the AKP, discredit the party leadership by releasing incriminating dossiers, and the

manufacture of crises. More prudent observers have suggested that a tacit -- if still tense -- understanding has been reached whereby the TGS has clarified its red lines on the presidency and Islamist policies and the AKP has agreed not to cross them. Rumors notwithstanding, it is clear that maneuvering will intensify in the lead up to the July 22 elections, and USG support for democracy, compromise, and the constitutional process will remain critical.

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